

CHARACTERS

Society Women:

Lysistrata, leader of Women for Peace
Kalonike, Lysistrata's neighbour
Myrrhine, leader of the Anagyros women
Kalike, a young Athenian woman
Lampito, leader of the Spartan women
Iris, leader of the Boetian women
Praxagora, leader of the Corinthian women

Cleaning Women:

Stratyllis
Rhodippe
Nikodike
Katina, younger

Athenian Men:

Phylurgus, an Athenian magistrate
Demostratus, a young Athenian public orator
Nikias, Athenian senator for finance
Peisander, Senator for law and order
Kinesias, an officer. Husband of Myrrhine
Masseur/ Doorman
Attaché

Spartan Men:

The Spartan Herald
The Spartan Ambassador

Secret Police:

Theorus
Nicarchus
Dikaiopolis
Amphitheus

NB. The actors playing Kinesias, the Doorman and the two Spartans double as the four Secret Policemen.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

The action of the play takes place in a bathhouse steam room in Athens, Ancient Greece.

ACT I Nearly dawn
ACT II Some time later

Time — Ancient Greek

PRODUCTION NOTE

A guide to production performance style

The characters in this adaptation of Aristophanes/Greer's text are best played as archetypes and in the broad style of classic British *Carry On* films such as *Carry On Cleo*. The cleaning women are the exception and should be played more naturalistically. They are the emotional heart of the piece. Lysistrata's address to the women of Athens and her duologue with Demonstratus are sincere but as a general rule if the piece is played for laughs then the politics take care of themselves.

The set

The set should be designed in a cartoon style and represents a once grand, now dilapidated steam room adorned with male statuary and Greek columns. The whole building looks as if it has been bombed and there is a gaping hole in the back wall through which we can see the Acropolis represented as a little model on a hill. There are four benches where patrons can sit in the steam or lie to be massaged. In the centre of the back wall there is an imposing doorway with the sign: "The Acropolis Bathhouse" above it. To one side is another smaller sign: "Male Members Only". To either side of the doorway are sunken pools of water. This doorway leads to other rooms in the bathhouse. Entrance to the bathhouse is through the centre of the audience and actors should be able to move freely into the auditorium. There are two trap doors in either side of the stage.

Costumes and props

In keeping with the setting of a steam room the characters spend most of the evening wearing towels. The effect of this is (a) to look sexy or ridiculous, depending on character, and (b) to give a timeless "toga" look. The towels are colour-coded to help the audience understand who's who. The Senators wear deep burgundy-coloured towels, the cleaning women end up in pink towels, the policemen in black, Athenian soldiers in bottle green and the Spartans in dark blue. The older men also wear smaller towels loosely around their necks to give them status. The outdoor clothes that we do see are in period but as the designers of the *Carry On* films might have viewed Ancient Greece. So the Society Women are terribly glamorous, the cleaning women, though not too ridiculous, are "Mrs Mops".

Phalli

The men's erect phalli are covered by towels and only slightly larger than life, rather than ridiculous. This ensures that, whilst comic, they remain believable and desirable. The Spartan Ambassador's phallus is bigger than everyone else's, much to his delight and the other men's annoyance. Phalli should only be in evidence where specified. Using them right from the beginning will reduce their comic impact.

Group reactions

For most of the play there are large groups of people on stage and the response of the group to the central dialogue is very important. In rehearsals the actors should be encouraged to vocalize these reactions according to their individual characters. A guide to group reactions is included in this text. These ad-libs should be set by the director for performance and are a vital ingredient in presenting the play as a lively debate.

The cleaning women

The cleaning women should all have accents, each can be different, from any country or region. The performers playing these roles should adapt their lines to suit the speech patterns, vocabulary and slang of the accent they have chosen. The dialogue in this script is notated as performed by the original cast. Stratyllis had a London accent, Rhodippe and Nikodike were from Yorkshire and Lancashire and Katina was from Newcastle.

Phil Willmott